1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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When the authors first made their way into the small farm communities which they came to know best, they were plunged into a mass of observation which, without knowledge of the valuations of the community upon age, had no interpretation. Night after night, the day's work done, their new acquaintances, at least the males among them, walked out upon the roads to this house and that in search of recreation and companionship. Mention of dances, "gambles," "hooleys," sings, *ceilidhthe*, filled our ears, belying the impression of a gray monotony of rural life too easily gathered by town-bred minds. Some of these sportive events were age-old survivals of ancient custom, like the bonfires of St. John's Eve. Others were nearly as ancient celebrations of crucial events in individual and family life, such as wakes, christenings, weddings. But many others were less occasional and less specialized gatherings, and others wore a very modern dress: a turkey raffle and a dance round a gramophone.

But our interest was soon caught by distinctions of participation, rather than those of kind. The people of the village participated variously. Different groups met more or less regularly at specific houses.

For instance, the "old fellows" went out on *cuaird*, as they called their visiting to join one another. They followed a deep-set regular habit. As they phrased it, "a man would feel lonely if he didn't go out on *cuaird*." In most communities, they usually convened at a particular house. Often their gatherings bore particular names. In one North Clare community, Rynamona by name, the old men's meeting was known as the *Dáil*. Before the Free State, it had been the "parliament." The name is a jocular one, of course, but it is expressive of the participants' evaluation of themselves nonetheless.

The young men know the *Dáil* as the "old men's house." They stay away. One of the cronies of Rynamona put the

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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matter most clearly when he described the old men's gathering from its members' point of view:

> It wouldn't suit [for the young men to come]. They gather in at Jack Roche's and they laugh and joke and play cards. They talk about the next gamble and the next dance, and that is all they know. It is a lot of codology [nonsense, buncombe]. It is only the old men, the men with families and a responsibility on them, they are the ones that come. And in our own way we learn a great deal. If you advance any argument, you must be prepared to defend it from all attack, and John Roche, "the public prosecutor," will ask you questions till he is sure it is right or wrong. Then some evening we have real discussions in which we settle problems. Other times we discuss farming. It wouldn't suit for the young men to come in, but, when we get old and they get married, then they will gather and talk about this and that. That is the way it always has been and that is the way it always will be. There is never any bad blood between any of the village, and one reason is because we talk things over.

This statement on the old men's gathering imparts a deeper reality to what appears to be merely a companionable pastime of the old men. The evening *cuaird* of the old men takes on an institutional flavor. It is a clique, of course, a tightly knit group of males of similar interests and similar status, giving rise to nicknames within itself which, as in the case here mentioned of the public prosecutor, express the members' position in the internal arrangement of the group. It has a definite meeting place and meeting time. It excludes those of dissimilar traits; in this instance, the young men. But it is a clique which operates within a traditional setting: "That is the way it always has been and is the way it always will be."

It is a clique, too, which performs a function for a larger group than those who make it up. In this case it is claimed for it, at least, that it prevents bad blood in the local community.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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CHAPTER X

The Old in the Community[1]

LET us examine the life of a local community in the rural "West of Ireland" and put to the test of observation the claim that the clique of evening visitors among the old men of the community plays a decisive role in its social life. Perhaps Rynamona already mentioned affords the best example. Yet any other community the authors knew well would afford as good a one. In all of them the old men met in much the same way and, in spite of different names and persons, acted in much the same way to form a similar old men's clique. By taking the example of Rynamona, we can throw the generalities of this conduct into relief.

Rynamona is a medium-sized townland in the limestone country of North Clare. It is like many another in the "good land" of rough limestone outcrops stretching back from the sea into the glaciated lakes strewn north in County Clare. To reach Rynamona is no easy task, even for horse and car. The main road north out of Corrofin to Kilfenora passes through Kilnaboy, where twelve houses, a school, a chapel, and a post office are all that remains of an antiquity preserved to the eye only in the ninth-century church and graveyard.

There, beside the graveyard, a side road leads off toward

[1] Much of the material in this chapter is taken from *The Irish Countryman* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1936), by Conrad M. Arensberg. It is used here by permission of the publishers.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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621 487 paths crisscrosses the fields in all directions from house to house and across the countryside beyond.

887 573 Old man O'Donoghue's house, the third in the village, is the "old men's house." Mrs. Ruin, a neighbor, will tell you what the old man means to the men of the village:

> The old man is getting weaker and when he is gone out of it the village won't be the same. He will be the greatest loss. It is round his fireplace the men gather. Where will they go when he dies?

But the question has not yet arisen for the men who meet there nearly every night, particularly in winter, when the evening is long and the work day its shortest. Soon after the evening meal they begin to gather. Occasionally this or that habitué may not come, but it is always the same group of men who stride across the threshold with a "God bless all here," and take their accustomed places.

888 542 O'Donoghue has the place of honor in the chair to the right of the fire. He is an old man now and no longer active beyond the house door. He lives here with his nephew, a man of fifty, and his nephew's wife. The couple have no children and must depend upon their own efforts in the working of the farm. It is a good farm and the nephew works it well, deferring to the old man in occasional matters.

888 573 521 O'Donoghue is the "judge" in this gathering. In the nightly discussions which take place around his fireplace, he has a judicial role. He is regarded as a wise man to whose opinions all must defer. Usually they know he contents himself with a word of affirmation, or now and again a slow and measured judgment upon a current topic. He initiates nothing and only occasionally adds a non-judicial bit to the conversation. Then he shows himself to have a fund of funny and apt anecdotes as good as any other man's. He rarely generalizes. When he does, his remarks deal with the "old times."

Silent as this shrewd old man is, his is the central position

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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old men's house he looked a different person. He was often 573
silent or contented himself with answering questions. 561
When he did speak, it was to "act the playboy," in the 521
country phrase. It seemed to be a periodic fluctuation with him. One evening he would be silent and the next he would be more than ready to joke, to render a song, to dance, and to break into playful banter. Sometimes his lively efforts were successful. Sometimes they were not. But the playboy role did not last long. A year later he was a constant visitor, and he had given up all other visits. He had moved in. O'Donoghue, the "judge," passed judgment one evening which affirmed his new place. "He's a bit of a playboy," he said, "but there's a good head on him."

These seven men make up the old men's *cuaird*. As the 573
evidence of their behavior shows, they are a closely knit 887
clique with a code of conduct and valuation of their own, one strong enough to enforce a specific personality on each of the members in accord with his role in the group.

To appraise the *raison d'être* of such a group in Rynamona, we must examine it in relation to the rest of the community. These seven are not the only old men in the community. Roche, the prosecutor, had an elder brother with a good farm across the lake on the line between Rynamona and the next townland, Carhunamadra. But the elder Roche is seventy-five and no longer stirs out the door. He is too feeble to come to the *cuaird* house, and his faculties are failing. His sons, still young men, work the farm.

But there is another as well, a more active old man. Moroney is perhaps the strongest farmer in Rynamona. His house in the village is the best also, and he has the best-stocked farm. Moroney and his wife, at sixty, have a son [592]
and daughter nearing thirty still at home. The four work energetically and the household is prosperous. Each year Moroney stands for them in the "station," and the family's

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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573 dues to the church are greater than any other's in Ryna-
887 mona. Such prosperity draws him a bit apart from the villagers, and occasionally in political discussions he will identify himself with the Cosgrave party, as a man with a "stake in the country."

All this draws Moroney away from his fellows. Some say there was an incident long ago when Moroney was young, but most have forgotten it. Nevertheless, there is a breach between Moroney and the rest of the older men of the village. He never attends at the old men's house and, when he goes on *cuaird*, it is usually to the house of Oscair, whom we shall describe presently.

Furthermore, just as not all the old men of Rynamona came to O'Donoghue's, so are their households unrepresented there. Unlike the cases of the elder Roche and Moroney, it is because in these other cases the men of the house are not eligible in age.

573 Two houses in the village send no man to the *cuaird* house. One of these is very poor and is a case of the "incomplete farm family" already discussed in a prior section. The only man there is a lad of twenty-five or so, who lives alone with his mother. Another of these is the case of O'Brien, a man of forty, married and with a family of children, the eldest of whom, a boy, is fifteen. O'Brien is a man of uncertain temper, given to gusts of anger. He is a moody man who doesn't do much or go out much. When he does, it is to the young men's gambles. Like John Quin, already described, he is in a transitional state, but he does nothing to hasten his advance.

Among the households beyond the village, one, that of Mackey, is likewise in transition. But with Mackey the process is hardly begun. His parents are dead, but he has only recently married and sent off a brother to the towns. He still visits with the young men.

The same holds for another family of Roches. The man

[i.e., farms worked by spinsters, bachelors, widows and widowers - Analyst]

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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of the house is only a few years married. His brother is as yet unprovided for and still lives with him. Both frequent young men's meetings. 573

The old men's house includes all the adult farm fathers of complete families whose children have just succeeded or are nearly ready to succeed them, with two exceptions. It brings in, too, two others, O'Loughlin, the silent old bachelor, and John Quin, whose status among the old age group is still provisional. The interviews already quoted have given an insight into the function this meeting performs for the community. The behavior of the group points again to the same function. This is the seat of judgment in the community. It is the clearing house of information and the court of opinion in which the decisions of the community are reached and the traditional knowledge of the peasantry applied and disseminated. From these meetings the men return home to their wives and sons, and the formulations they have reached spread thus through the community of individuals who share life in Rynamona. 573 621 208 887

Let us examine the type of topic that comes up in the old men's meetings. If we want to assure ourselves that the meeting has the influence its members ascribe to it, a glance at the conversation that takes place there should bear them out.

The old men's meeting is an informal gathering. It arises in response to the community's interests and its immemorial custom. Naturally, different personalities and personal idiosyncrasies make the gathering slightly different in each rural community. Occasionally it may be absent altogether for various causes, such as the dying-off of a central member of the group. Often there is a sort of interregnum between one generation of old men and the next. This was the case in one Clare community studied by the authors. There the old men had lost the central figure of their group and, diminished in number, spent most of their time in enfeebled 573 887

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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loneliness at home. Two new cliques of slightly younger "old men" were competing for central position in the community.

But despite such variation from community to community, the old men's *cuairds* act very similarly. The topics brought up and debated upon are much the same from year to year and place to place. First in importance, however, are those concerning agriculture. Times of sowing, reaping, harvesting are debated; the merits of various seeds are disputed; shop and fair prices are compared; and the community's trade often affected thus. The "old men" are conservative farmers, as are most peasants, and an innovation must be thoroughly tested before it wins, here in the evening *cuaird*, the approval of the community. Traditional methods of farming receive their strongest support here in the web of legend, proverb, and reference to the past that the speakers weave around them.

Much of the community's relation to the outer world is debated here and determined by the old men's agreement. In late years, this has come to be called "politics." It is here that petitions for roads, for relief work in winter, for extension of agricultural prize schemes, and all the "political" business of the county council and its committees originates on the side of the local community. It is here too that the community reaches its unanimity in party voting. In Rynamona, for example, it was felt that it was in the interest of all that there should be no dissension on the score of politics. The old men's *cuaird* debated the matter and agreed upon support of Fianna Fail, the De Valera party, an allegiance it held for the years 1927 to the time of the authors' visits. Even O'Halloran, whose private views leaned in another direction, begged the authors that no word of his political heterodoxy be allowed to reach the ears of his neighbors. "I wouldn't want them to think I wasn't with them," he said.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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Here it is too that the community makes its appraisal of its own members and those with whom it is in contact. And that appraisal tells quite heavily in the behavior the community will adopt toward the person or condition appraised. Even the priest finds each of his acts and even his sermons discussed and debated in the evening *cuaird*, and he "gets a name" according to the decision reached. In Rynamona an incident occurred which shows the type of slow appraisal the community makes and the speed with which, once its judgment is formed, it puts its decision into action. Not far away in the same general region, a gentlewoman moved back after years of absence to a small manor house which the family had had for many years. She was unknown to the farmers and, despite her friendly interest in them, seemed to be unable to establish contact with them. This distressed her, the more that her kindness seemed ineffectual in putting an end to the inevitable petty pilfering which she knew she must expect. One day, about a year later, her horse bolted on the country road. An expert horsewoman, she soon brought him into control. Thereafter her luck with the country people changed. Her exploit had made the rounds of the local community and had won approval for her. The old men agreed she was a grand lady and had a great hand with horses. And the petty pilfering sank to manageable proportions.

The community regulates its internal affairs through the *cuaird* as well. It is here public opinion is formulated. There is nothing formal about the decisions made upon the incidents arising from day to day. The local community has no implement with which to enforce its will. But it has the power of gossip and in action the power which in the critical days of the land agitation won itself an international name: the boycott.

In a later section the sanctions the local community exercises will be discussed. It is sufficient here to point out

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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573 626 208 887 this role of the *cuaird*. An example from another community than Rynamona will throw the type of action it can take into relief.

An "incomplete family" affords the example. It was made up of an old woman and her thirty-year-old son. Theirs was a poor farm, and ordinarily they would have been an object of commiseration. But they were not. In fact, they were a constant annoyance. The son was generally regarded as bad and lazy. He neglected his farm and exhibited an obstinate disregard of village opinion in which his mother abetted him. The result was, naturally, that their house was shunned and he went nowhere to *cuaird*.

But no crisis arose till the episode of the pig. One autumn the son brought home a large Irish white sow. The sow was more nimble than most of her kind, and neither the mother nor the son took any pains to keep her at home. She wandered through the village at will and soon devastated many a cabbage patch. The village took alarm, and the more so that the sow might well prove dangerous to young children. There were angry words among the women, and the men for once backed them up. In the *cuaird* it was hinted that the sow might be found dead one morning. But before such an event could take place, the son took warning and sold the pig. "Public pressure," if you will, forced his decision and resolved the conflict, but it left him as low as ever in the village's esteem.

573 887 538 And lastly, the *cuaird* is the seat of traditional lore and entertainment. Its members are the repositories of folklore and legend. And the official belief of the countryside finds its expression and its reaffirmation in the discussion of events and the recounting of histories and incidents. In communities still at least partly Irish-speaking, such as Luogh, most of its members are *seanachaidhthe*, storytellers in the traditional vein. And it is among them that traditional repertories of a saga, folk tale, song, and legend still get an

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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audience. The point of importance here is that it is among the old people that folk myth and folk belief are preserved and expressed for the community.

If we are to examine in full rural behavior based upon age and its connection with the old adult clique whose function in the community we are assessing, we must offer some contrast with the behavior of other age groups.

We have already mentioned that the old men's house in Rynamona was not the only seat of visiting after the day's work, and that the entertainment provided there was merely *one instance of* many gatherings taking place almost nightly, at least through the winter, in rural communities. In the statements given by older men about the meeting of the young men we have seen something of the manner in which other pursuits than those of the men's house are regarded.

Indeed in all the communities which came under the authors' notice the young men were as ardent evening visitors as were the older men. In Rynamona they were no less so.

There they gathered in most often at the house of Roche, the "prosecutor." They did this from long habit, as did their elders. But they had no larger justification for their doing so. They went because "you never feel the time passing when you're in with the boys." But there were marked differences in their meeting. There was no central clique so closely integrated as that in O'Donoghue's house. There were pairs of lads, brothers, friends, and groups of three and four and five who habitually played cards or walked the roads together.

A greater difference lay in their complete lack of concern with the affairs of the community. One could get them to talk only about their own plans or the trials of their own kind and age. There was no debate, no reaching of decisions, no appeal to tradition. The skills upon which those taking part in the meetings prided themselves and for which

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ner of the prize can count himself a proud man, for to be known in the countryside as a "great gambler" is a coveted mark of shrewdness and skill.

The older men seldom attend the gambles. They are the province of the young. For the latter, they are a crystallization of the more informal card playing, such as that at Roche's house, already described, and they give the successful young men a prestige in the community ordinarily denied them. For in late years tournaments have sprung up covering whole sections of the county and it is a proud team which can bring back a five or ten pound district prize to its home community.

From the standpoint of an enumeration of those taking part in the gambles, too, the gambles show themselves to be such a crystallization. They bring into association on more definite occasions the groups, such as that at Roche's house, which meet habitually. They unite most of the young men, especially the more active among them, with a few of the older. But it is from the young men's world of habit that their union is created.

In Rynamona the young men who gathered nightly at Roche's house were the mainstays of the gambles. They could be counted upon to attend all of them. They played well and long, as they had learned the games among themselves. But they were not the only ones to come. Most of the slightly older men of what we shall call the intermediate *cuaird*, to be described later, such as John Quin, the newcomer to the old men's house already named, came from time to time, and there was always a sprinkling of young men, kinsfolk, and "friends" from near-by communities. It was only the members of the old men's house who stayed away. They alone had given up the habits of young men. To them the gamble was "codology."

Thus the first point of difference between the visiting habits of the old men and the young men, their lack of cen-

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

182 593 888 578 woman would ask the old person her opinion on how to do this and that there never would be any trouble and the new wife could go ahead and do just as she pleased. Then the old woman would think she was doing it the way that she said. If the daughter-in-law did what she ought, she would do this and treat the old folks nice."

Deference and respect solve the problem, then, but if they do not, it is the older woman who must leave. That this should be the case reflects one great function of farm marriage. The son must cleave to his bride. If the worst comes to the worst, the new family may 'turn the old people out on the side of the road'. Terrible as such an ending would be, it is the necessary one. For the pattern of family and land must continue in the persons of the new man and woman and their children.

182 593 887 602 This desire is the binding force in the relations of all the household. It is as strong in the old people as in the new couple. The new balance of sentiments finds its expression in the inclusion of the children born to the young man and woman. Like so much of their behaviour, the country-people describe the new ties in terms of the 'help' they afford to the family corporation. And once again, naturally, an economic explanation is all too elliptical. A thoughtful farmer of Inagh generalized the matter in words which show the identity between help in farm work and social reciprocities: "When there are children in the house, the old

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

from plants growing in the district as formerly, but are imported. 286
There are several weavers in the district, and the clothes are made up by a local tailor. One unusual occupation, that of cloth miller or presser is carried on by a man in Belmullet, who uses a rather primitive press of his own construction.

There is very little regular employment for labourers, except 464
that given by a few of the resident gentry and some of the people of Belmullet. Labourers receive 1*s.* 6*d.* a day, or a 1*s.* and their [465]
food; if at harvest time, threshing or employed at cutting turf, slightly more, about 2*s.* a day.

Little or no work is done by the majority of the men during the [222]
winter months, except to gather a little drift weed along the coast.

The women attend to the ordinary duties of the house, assist at 462
field work and at bringing home turf; they gather and dry carrageen moss (*sphaerococcus crispus*) which they sell at the rate of 2*s.* a stone (unbleached); they also card and spin the wool. Old women often get employment going from house to house oiling, carding, and [887]
spinning the wool for the household; for this work they receive 2*s.* a week and their keep.

2. *Family Life and Customs.*—The general characters of family life 871
are much the same as those of the people of Inishbofin.

The children, who are usually numerous, are sent to school, if at all, at about five years of age; they show plenty of aptness at acquiring knowledge, but as their attendance is very irregular, through their being wanted at home to help their parents, their progress is much impeded. When they reach the age of fourteen or fifteen years they leave school and enter into the regular work of the household until they have attained means either to marry and settle down or to emigrate.

Some few of the girls, after leaving school, go out as domestic 357
servants either in local situations or to England or Scotland.

Both sexes usually marry young, the matches being arranged by 58
the parents, and money rather than romance being the chief element in the case, as a projected marriage is often abandoned owing to disputes between parents without the young people themselves being consulted in the matter. Love-making, except in the case of engaged couples, but seldom occurs, but that it does sometimes happen is [832]
shown by the number and variety of love-charms and omens. As in most other parts of Ireland the majority of marriages occur before Shrove. When full agreements have been made by the parents, the young man goes and asks the girl personally. If he be refused, he does

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

624 partners to come to Inis Beag to confer with him, knowing that they were ill with
536 influenza, which resulted in a serious outbreak of the disease shortly afterward. A
[793] fire which broke out in a storage room next to the house of the king some months
[731] after the shipwreck was viewed by irate islanders as divine retribution for his "greed and selfishness."

624 In Ireland, the term "gombeen" is used to demean the usurious shopkeeper,
444 but this word is directed against the king only by those who most dislike him, and
275 then to connote what they consider a combination of piety and avarice in his behavior rather than his economic practices. His role as moral guardian, with frequent instruction and reprimand as to manners and misdemeanors to men in the pub and children visiting the shop, is deeply resented by many. He does not care to have women make purchases in the shop, where they can observe men drinking and be observed in turn, ostensibly on moral grounds; he urges that children do the marketing instead, not for the convenience of their mothers, it is said, but because he can overcharge and short-change them more easily. To dissuade women from shopping, he reads out their lists and talks with them about family affairs in a loud whisper, so that they have no privacy. The men complain not only of his alleged practice of overcharging and short-changing them late at night when the pub is overcrowded with "light headed" drinkers, but also of his criticizing their actions in public, his frequent closing of the pub before midnight, and his refusal to serve those whom he feels have "taken too much" or those about to attend a party where more drinks will be proffered them.

624 Supporters of Fine Gael and Labour, among others, object to the manner in
664 which the king curries the favor of Fianna Fail representatives and campaigns for
666 the party. He is accused of using illegal tactics, such as haranguing voters outside of the school as they enter to cast their ballots, in his endeavor to keep Fianna Fail
624 in power. A more serious charge related to this one is his opposition to change in
657 Inis Beag which might benefit the population as a whole, an opposition which
178 explains his support of political party and church—both conservative forces. It is asserted that, just as the government wants to preserve the Gaelic language and supposed Celtic virtues of the folk and the church their strength of belief and morality and thus underwrite the *status quo*, the senior publican wants no changes which might threaten his economic position and control over the lives of the islanders. To this end, he is thought to use his influence with priests and politicians who are in a position to modify local conditions.

184 Absent from Inis Beag is the evening *cuaird* of old men, which plays such
573 a decisive role in the political and social life of villages on the mainland. It is a
887 clique of visitors who usually convene at a particular home, called the "old men's house," to formulate local policies.

626 Much of the community's relation to the outer world is debated here and deter-
573 mined by the old men's agreement.... It is here that petitions for roads, for relief work in winter, for extension of agricultural prize schemes, and all of the "political" business of the county council and its committees originates on the side of the local community. It is here too that the community reaches its unanimity in party voting.... Here it is too that the community makes its appraisal of its own members and those with whom it is in contact. And that appraisal tells quite heavily in the behavior the community will adopt toward the person or

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

181 and the never ending toil needed to maintain present subsistence standards; the
152 spying and malicious gossiping of their fellows and the ubiquity of jealousy and
[562] envy; the isolation of the island, particularly during winter months; numbing boredom and the dearth of social activities; for women, the lack of freedom and of attention and affection from their spouses, as well as the necessity of enduring
828 sexual relations; and, as stated above, hypochondria. Much has been written about
829 isolation and its depressive effects on the islanders, and the folk themselves con-
[184] stantly complain of being shut off from the world and prey to wind, rain, fog, and raging sea. But isolation need not lead inevitably to depression, for my wife and I conducted research in another island of Ireland—far distant from and even more inaccessible than Inis Beag—where the inhabitants do not feel isolated and are not depressed.

121 I have expanded the clinical usage of the term hypochondria to include fears of the spirit as well as fears of the body, for ill health can as often be induced by supernatural forces, and death—whether by disease, injury, or aging—is the
164 ultimate fear with its threat of eternal damnation. Colds, influenza, dyspepsia, migraine headaches, teeth decay, the crippling effects of joint and muscle ailments,
[163] hypermetrophy, and mental illness are paramount among health concerns. "Flu" epidemics are frequent in the island and are a chief cause of death among people
[887] who have become weakened by old age. As the folk advance in years, they come to spend more time in bed and by the turf fire and venture out less during the winter
[751] and when it rains. Drafts are avoided whenever possible, and clothes dampened by seas which wash the canoes or by rain are changed for dry ones at the first oppor-
[757] tunity. Colds, flu, indigestion, and headaches more than any other afflictions send
[753] the islanders to the nurse for drugs and to their own folk remedies for relief. Dyspepsia is known as "wind" and is thought to result from diet, but the nurses say that most cases of indigestion are the result of tension—"nervous stomach." Nine cases of migraine were reported in Inis Beag during 1959, but many other islanders, most of whom are women, suffer from "nervous headache" which can
[123] approach migraine in intensity of pain. Neither my wife nor I were ill during the
[767] winter of 1959 and 1960, even though we were abroad in all sorts of inclement weather against the advice of our neighbors; when we began picking wild garlic to season our food, it was reasoned that the condiment afforded us protection against the flu, which reached almost epidemic proportions that year, and as a result this folk medicine was used more widely and consistently than usual.

[114] Nativists and primitivists praise the health and hardiness of the folk and boast of the absence of rheumatism and allied infirmities among them and the sharpness of their sight. But, just as most adults past 30 years of age suffer from decay and loss of teeth, they also suffer from muscle and joint ailments, caused by the "damp and cold," and from far-sightedness. It is not known how many folk wear glasses in the privacy of their homes, but only two persons, both men, wear them publicly—and self-consciously when they do. Most glasses are not prescription made but are purchased in mainland shops after many pairs displayed on the counters have been tested, and often a single pair will serve the needs of all the
[829] elders of a household. The islanders among themselves constantly complain of these
[668] and other ailments, although some will praise the health and hardiness of the local